



January, 2011

Rep. Betty McCollum  
1714 Longworth HOB  
Washington DC, 20515

Rep. McCollum,

We are contacting you today as the Co-chairs of The Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (MN-CCD). We are a broad based coalition of more than 100 organizations of persons with disabilities, providers and advocates, dedicated to improving the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities by advancing sound public policy. As you are likely aware, issues of quality and access regarding healthcare and longterm care services are critical to the successful independent living of Minnesotans with disabilities. Our coalition has and continues to strongly support the Affordable Care Act (ACA) due to the positive impact this legislation will have on Minnesota's disability community. The ACA contains provisions that address long standing barriers to healthcare access that the disability community has struggled with for many years. Additionally, the ACA contains provisions that provide the support needed for states such as Minnesota to reform the ways in which longterm care services are provided to our citizens with disabilities – by focusing on simplifying services options and increasing costs efficiencies.

The ACA takes steps to address two of the most problematic healthcare issues the disability community struggles with: the inability to access certain health insurance plans with pre-existing conditions and the lifetime and annual limits placed on coverage. For many Minnesotans with disabilities and their families, these two single issues have resulted in extreme limitations in choices for healthcare coverage options as well as severe financial distress. The provisions of the ACA prohibiting plans both from denying coverage to those with pre-existing conditions and from including lifetime and annual limits represent a step forward in allowing those with disabilities to have the same choices around healthcare access and quality as those without disabilities.

The ACA also includes opportunities for reforming the way Minnesota currently provides longterm care services to individuals with disabilities. The option of contributing funds to a longterm care services insurance program that can then be accessed to cover these needs through the Community Living Assistance and Supports Act is a welcomed alternative for the many Minnesotans with disabilities who are currently forced into poverty to secure Medicaid coverage of their longterm care needs. Additionally, the Community First Choice Option (CFCO) is a promising next step in our work to end the institutional bias that exists in the world of disability services. The incentives included in CFCO for states to provide a simplified personal assistance program has great potential for the thousands of Minnesotans with disabilities who could live independently in their communities (at a far cheaper cost than an institutional placement) with the support of this program.

As individual states and as a nation, we have made great strides in the way we support our fellow citizens with disabilities to be contributing members of our communities, and we should be very proud of this. However all of our work to develop supports in the areas of employment, transportation and housing means very little to the individual with a disability who struggles with their health and longterm care needs. The legislation passed as part of the ACA at long last addresses the unjust barriers to healthcare access that have characterized the disability community for too long and provides the necessary support for states to move forward with reforms to longterm care services provision that can save money in the long run. It is for these reasons that we ask you and your fellow members of congress to please work to protect this legislation that so positively benefits Minnesotans with disabilities.

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